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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MAPUTO 001168

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SUBJECT: WHO IS OBSERVING THIS ELECTIONS PROCESS?

Classified By: A/DCM Matthew Roth, Reasons 1.4(b+d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Foreign and domestic groups are observing the process that led up to the October 28 general elections and now the process afterwards. Key foreign observer groups include the European Union and an effort led by the U.S. Embassy with the coordination of the United Nations Development Program--bolstered by substantial U.S. financial and logistical support and a significant U.S. contingent of volunteer observers. At least five other international groups are present as well. The Electoral Observatory and the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa are respectively the only two major domestic and international civil society observer groups. The late entry of many observer groups into the process may affect their conclusions as to the nature of Mozambican democracy, since much of the worst transgressions against opposition parties happened earlier. The EU's experience and rigorous methodology provide it with an especially authoritative voice, but its cautious insistence on documentary evidence may lead it to underestimate the political machinations and pressures already employed by the ruling FRELIMO party to ensure victory. END SUMMARY.

CHARGE MEETS WITH EU CHIEF OBSERVER

¶2. (C) The EU team of 131 observers is led by Chief Observer Fiona Hall, a British member of the European Parliament and veteran of five observer missions, including Angola and Togo, where she was Chief Observer in 2007. The Chief Observer is supported by a core team of eight legal, political, media and logistics experts who arrived about eight weeks prior to election day. An additional 24 long-term advisers arrived about five weeks ago and were deployed to the provinces to report on local preparations. EU short-term observers arrived within the past few days and will focus on polling, counting and the aggregation of results.

¶3. (C) In a meeting with the Charge on October 26, Hall emphasized that the EU's conclusions must be "evidence based" and stated the EU had submitted a number of concerns to the National Electoral Commission (CNE) and had received some satisfactory answers while others remained unaddressed. Hall opined that the CNE's decision to exclude many opposition candidates may have come about because the CNE was administratively overwhelmed, which resulted in some unevenness in the handling of application forms. Charge responded that if so, then the CNE should have provided adequate time for the parties to correct any inconsistencies, as allowed in the law. Hall stressed the importance of not passing judgment on the election until the votes had been tallied. Charge concurred, but noted that the evidence of political manipulation in the run-up to the election had been well-established by the independent press, local electoral groups, and well-placed sources even within Frelimo. Hall seemed less-than-well-briefed on some of the issues and

peppered the Charge with questions, especially about Frelimo party mechanics.

U.S. EMBASSY LEADS UNDP OBSERVATION EFFORT

¶4. (SBU) With the coordination of the UNDP, Embassy Maputo leads an observer group of approximately 70 representatives of various diplomatic missions resident in Maputo, including 35 American staff of the mission. American employees and family members from several agencies at post are participating as observers in all provinces. The USG has provided vehicles, training space and planning support.

INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS MEET TO REVIEW ELECTIONS

¶5. (C) On October 29, heads of international observer missions met to review the state of play on elections. In addition to the EU and the UNDP (represented by the U.S. Embassy as the lead), other groups reviewed their missions. The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), with financial support from USAID, has 85 observers, plus an additional group from its parliamentary forum (SADC-PF). The Commonwealth Observer Group (COG) of 12, led by Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, the former President of Sierra Leone, arrived on October 23. The African Union (AU) also has an observer team, as does the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Nations (CPLP). The representatives identified several areas of concern related to the election day itself including isolated

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cases of violence and ballot box manipulation, but generally agreed that the process on October 28 went relatively well. However, the groups also agreed that a distinction must be made between this and the separate issue that some groups have raised about serious problems of transparency and exclusion in the runup to the election. Both the Commonwealth representative and poloff urged for inclusion of these concerns in statements made by observer groups, and called for continued vigilance since the process is ongoing.

FEW CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS, ALBEIT WELL-RESPECTED

¶6. (SBU) There are two noteworthy civil society groups doing observation. The Electoral Observatory (OE)*--supported with USG funds*--is a coalition of domestic religious and civil society groups, that has fielded almost 1,000 domestic observers. The OE has provided the most credible local perspective thus far and is generally respected by all parties. The Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA) was founded in 1996 in Johannesburg and maintains field offices throughout Africa, including Maputo. The EISA observation team of 24 African observers is led by Christina Thorpe, head of Sierra Leone's Electoral Commission. The two groups, using SMS texting from observers located at polling sites, are doing parallel vote tabulation, proven in past Mozambican elections to be a fairly reliable gauge of turnout and voting.

COMMENT: DIVERGING VIEWS LIKELY

¶7. (C) Because several of the international observer groups arrived very late in the electoral process--before much of the most worrisome actions against opposition parties had already happened--their conclusions as to the nature of the Mozambican elections may differ significantly. In an effort to remain scrupulously objective, it is also possible that the EU may underestimate the harm already done by FRELIMO manipulation. However, the initial agreement among observer

groups on October 29 that a well-run process on elections day does not equate to an overall successful election tacitly acknowledges serious problems, which may be reflected in the preliminary public statements by many of the missions on October 30. The UNDP observation mission, at our encouragement, is delaying any statement until the following week to take into account the actions over the weekend.

CHAPMAN